

# Cutler Bay NEWS

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## 'Operation Grinchbusters' helps reduce crime during holiday

BY GARY ALAN RUSE

The holidays are a festive and event-filled time for most everyone, but they also bring an added threat of crime aimed at shoppers who are out buying gifts for family and friends. The Town of Cutler Bay's "Operation Grinchbusters" program was able to reduce greatly that kind of activity between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day.

Operation Grinchbusters focused on high profile target areas such as Southland Mall, Best Buy Shopping Center (Marlin Road and S. Dixie Highway), Old Cutler Town Center (SW 204th Street and Old Cutler Road), Toys R Us (SW 198th Street and S. Dixie Highway), Publix Shopping Center (SW 184th Street and S. Dixie Highway), and businesses along S. Dixie Highway between SW 184 Street and SW 198 Street. Other areas also were included in the plan.

Mayor Peggy Bell said she was pleased with the results from this year's effort by the town's police units.

"They stopped so many things that could have happened by having their undercover cars there and their police cars there and being very diligent," Mayor Bell said. "One of the things I was most proud of is that there were 274 citizen contacts. At a time when the country is having so many problems feeling confident in the relationship they have with their neighborhood police, ours really reach out and make sure that the residents know that they're there for them and they're there to protect them and to hear



A Cutler Bay Policing Unit patrol car is pictured at this Kmart.

their concerns. The fact that there were 274 contacts in just that one month period says a lot."

The General Investigations Unit (GIU), Neighborhood Resource Unit (NRU) and the Crime Suppression Team were involved in the program. Besides directed patrols there were park and walk activities, covert surveillances and proactive enforcement.

"We're super proud of our police and the work they did to make this a safe holiday season for residents," Bell said. "One of the reasons we incorporated is that we now have a fully staffed police force for the number of residents we have. We didn't have that in 2005. Before incorporation we had two officers patrolling 40 square miles, and now we

have between eight and 13 officers at any given time on patrol."

Holiday related crimes include robberies, residential burglaries, commercial burglaries, vehicle burglaries, stolen vehicles, aggravated assaults, and aggravated battery. In the past criminals often stole purchased gift items from cars in mall parking lots, robbed shoppers walking alone to their cars, or committed other crimes, such as shoplifting.

During the period between Nov. 24, 2014 and Jan. 1, 2015 there were only four robberies, 14 vehicular burglaries and 33 cases of larceny.

The town manager's office issued a report crediting the police for keeping the numbers of those crimes lower than they were before the program was put in place.